

retirement savings, and other things Americans need; and to give our families the securities they deserve by keeping the crime rate coming down.

We can do all these things and have an affordable tax cut, or we can squander our hard-won progress on short-term thinking.

Just remember a few years ago—many people never thought we could balance the budget, but we did, and now we actually have a chance to pay off the national debt. Many never thought we could bring down crime rates, but we did, dramatically. Now we have a chance to achieve something that not too long ago would have seemed pure fantasy. In the early years of the new century, we can make America the safest big nation on Earth. We can do this, but only if we act now in the long-term interest of our Nation.

So, again, I call on the Congress and all Americans to make this a season of progress. Let's keep thinking about tomorrow.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:32 p.m. on July 23 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 23 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Picnic in Aspen, Colorado

July 24, 1999

Thank you very much. Thank you. First of all, let me say that the setting is too gorgeous and the day too beautiful really to have a political speech. *[Applause]* I was hoping no one would clap when I said that, but anyway—*[laughter]*. And so I will be brief. But I want to thank you for being here. I want to thank all the people involved with the Democratic Party and all of those who were hosting events or doing things for us who had to go through this mad scramble of change in our schedule because of the death of King Hassan and the absolute conviction that Hillary and I have that we should go to Morocco to the funeral service.

He was a great friend of the peace process. And after—Hillary went over there and went

to see him. He stood with us in human rights battles; he's done a lot of things that were very, very good for the United States and for the world. And so—and he was our friend. So we're going to go.

But I thank all of you for changing your schedules, and I thank you for your support. I want to thank our good friends, Dianne and Dick, for having us at their humble little place here. *[Laughter]* This is a gorgeous, serene, wonderful setting, and I thank them. I want to thank Congresswoman Diana DeGette. And I know that Maggie Fox is here, Congressman Udall's wife. I thank her for being here. I thank all the officials of the Colorado Democratic Party and the people from here in Aspen who met me last night. When did I get in—12:30, a quarter to 1:00, some ridiculous hour. And 12 people came out, we had a little 30-minute discussion last night about the state of the world. It was quite wonderful.

I want to make a few points as briefly as I can. Governor Romer made many of them, and Hillary referenced the work that he and Bea and she and I did for many years when we were Governors together. First of all, this is a very different country than it was in January of 1993. A lot of people have forgotten that. This is a different country than it was in January of '93.

And it changed because we had a different set of ideas and we implemented them and they worked. And I won't bore you with all the details, but I think it's very important. And it's very important as we let the next year and a half unfold, what happens in our country, what happens in our politics system.

You know, I hear some of the people who oppose us now basically, after telling everybody for 6½ years what a bad guy I was; they're now basically saying, "Oh well, Bill Clinton is like Michael Jordan; he just jumps higher than the other guys; now the Democrats—he's gone, so we'll put them in the cellar again." There's a sort of cynical political theme.

Let me tell you something. I could not have done anything—anything in the last 6 years if our ideas hadn't been right, and if I hadn't had the help of Al Gore and Hillary and Dianne Feinstein and every Member of

Congress and all the people in our administration team who did that—and all of you who helped us throughout all these long years in the good and the bad times.

Politics is about values and ideas and actions and whether they change people's lives or not. So the first thing I just want to say to all of you who have been with us all the time, you ought to feel pretty good out here—not just because this is a beautiful day in a beautiful place but this is a different country than it was.

The second thing I want to say is we have to decide two things in the next year and a half. We have to decide what are we going to do right now with our prosperity, with our surplus, and what decisions will we make in the next election cycle about where we go.

I had a very interesting question in the press conference earlier this week. Susan Page said, "Well, Mr. President, your approval ratings are back up after Kosovo and you won the war, and it's very strong approval ratings, but this question was asked our voters: 'Do you want to vote for someone who will just continue the President's policies, or someone who will change policies?' And someone who will change policies won 50 to 38."

And I said, "Well Susan, if they polled me, I'd have been in the 50 percent, too, because our country is about continuous renewal." And I had to spend the last 6 years trying to make sure this country could work again. Now that things are working well, the question is what kind of change are we going to have—not whether we'll change—are we going to build on what we've done and go beyond it, or are we going to go back to things that didn't work before in the blind hope that they will?

And I'll just give you a couple of examples. First of all, in the moment. The big debate in Washington is, what do we do with the surplus. Well, let me say this. We produced a balanced budget in 1997 by cutting spending rigorously and saying we would keep these caps in place by 5 years, and by continuing to grow the economy by getting interest rates down and investment up. Now, so we now have this projected surplus. But you should also know that we have an enormous number of teaching hospitals in cities

throughout America, for example, saying we need to put more money in the Medicare program to take care of the health care systems in the country.

I believe that we should be investing more, not less, in education, the environment, and biomedical research. I don't think we should cut back. And perhaps most important, I think this gives us a chance to meet the challenge of the aging of America and the challenge of giving this country a long-term pattern for growth. And let me just address those briefly.

The number of people over 65 is going to double in the next 30 years. There are going to be fewer people working and more people retired. Social Security is going to run out of money in 2034; Medicare is going to run out of money in 2015. I think we ought to set aside most of the surplus to save Social Security; to save and modernize Medicare; to add more preventive tests for osteoporosis and cancer and other things to try to keep people out of the hospital in the first place; to add a prescription drug benefit that is modest, but will be very helpful to 75 percent of the people who are over 65 who don't have adequate drug coverage; and to do it in a way that would allow us to become, for the first time since—listen to this—1835, debt-free.

Now, why should the liberal party, the more liberal party, be for making America debt-free? Because in 1999 and in 2000 and from now on, in a global economy, when money travels across national borders at the speed of light, interest rates are set in a global environment. And if a wealthy country is out of debt, it means that the people who live in that wealthy country can borrow money at lower cost, which means there will be more investment, more jobs, higher wages, lower car payments, lower credit card payments, lower home mortgage payments, lower college loan payments, and higher economic growth over a longer period of time.

It also means that when a global economy gets in trouble, as Asia got in trouble, Russia got in trouble, and our friends and trading partners and people we hope will remain democracies need money, they can get the money they need at lower cost because we won't be out there taking it away from them.